

Kathy Martinez

Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labor



As Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy, Kathy Martinez leads the Department's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and advises the U.S. Secretary of Labor and internal agencies on how departmental regulations and policies impact people with disabilities. In ODEP, she oversees strategic planning and performance management for a number of policy initiatives to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to prepare for and succeed in employment. As part of this, Ms. Martinez established a logic model and identified corresponding metrics that are used to assess ODEP's progress towards its goal of improving the number and quality of job opportunities for people with disabilities in America's labor force.

Among ODEP's chief policy accomplishments during Ms. Martinez's tenure is assisting the department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs in developing and enacting new rules designed to strengthen Federal contractors' responsibilities to hire, retain and advance qualified people with disabilities under Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Under her leadership, ODEP also played a critical role in President Barack Obama's July 2010 Executive Order directing all federal agencies to increase the representation of people with disabilities in their workforces. As part of this, she oversaw the development of eFedLink, a first-of-its-kind online community of practice that facilitates the exchange of information and ideas about disability employment among federal hiring managers and human resources personnel.

Ms. Martinez has also led ODEP in putting policy priorities into practice through several innovative grant programs. These include Add Us In, through which consortia nationwide are working to increase the capacity of small businesses to employ people with disabilities, and the Employment First State Leadership Mentor Program, through which several states are receiving support to promote community-based, integrated employment as the primary outcome for people with significant disabilities. Since arriving at ODEP, she has also brought an increased focus to the intersecting issues of technology and disability employment,

engaging industry partners and employers in an effort to open virtual doors for people with disabilities.

Under Ms. Martinez's leadership, ODEP also launched the award-winning Campaign for Disability Employment, a national, multi-organization public awareness initiative that educates about the value and talent people with disabilities bring to America's workplaces and economy. This integrated campaign has produced two television public service announcements (PSAs), "I Can" and "Because," both which challenge common myths and misconceptions about the expectations and job skills of people with disabilities. Together, these PSAs have garnered millions of dollars in earned media airtime.

Prior to being nominated by the President in 2009, Ms. Martinez was Executive Director of the World Institute on Disability, where she successfully managed a number of initiatives, among them Proyecto Visión, a national technical assistance center to increase employment opportunities for Latinos with disabilities in the U.S. She has also served on the National Council on Disability, the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the State Department's advisory committee on disability and foreign policy.

A graduate of San Francisco State University, Ms. Martinez speaks and publishes widely on an array of topics related to disability employment, including the emergence of disability as an essential component of workplace diversity and inclusion and the importance of expectation in ensuring youth with disabilities grow up with an assumption of work—a topic on which Ms. Martinez, who herself was born blind, offers compelling and personal perspective.